

Hanna: Vet homelessness morally inexcusable; House passes 'Homes for Heroes Act'

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, **U.S. Rep. Richard Hanna** joined his colleagues in passing H.R. 3298, the Homes for Heroes Act. The bill establishes a Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs and requires an annual report on veterans' homelessness.

Rep. Hanna supports this measure as a first step toward combating homelessness among our veterans.

"Veteran homelessness has reached a crisis point and it is morally inexcusable," Rep. Hanna said. "We have an obligation to take care of these brave men and women who sacrificed so much on our behalf."

On any given night in the United States, 649,917 persons experience homelessness. According to a report by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), there were nearly 76,000 homeless veterans on a single night in January of 2010, while roughly 145,000 veterans spent at least one night in a shelter during that year.

Veterans are overrepresented among the homeless population. While they account for roughly 9.5 percent of the total population of persons over the age of 18 in the United States, veterans comprised 13 percent of sheltered homeless adults in 2010 and 16 percent of homeless adults at a given point in time.

Terésa Fava-Schram, project director for the Central New York Veteran's Outreach Center in Utica, applauded the measure.

"We're happy Congressman Hanna is supporting this very important measure to help combat veteran homelessness," Fava-Schram said. "Two important agencies – the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veterans

Affairs – will finally be joined together to address this growing need."

The Central New York Veteran's Outreach Center was selected as one of five communities in the country for the Veteran Homelessness Prevention Demonstration (VHPD) Project, a collaborative initiative by the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Veterans Affairs (VA), and Labor (DOL) to explore innovative early interventions to help prevent veteran homelessness. Additional information can be found at <http://cnyvoc.org>.

- One of the bill's key provisions establishes the position of Special Assistant for Veterans Affairs within HUD to coordinate services to homeless veterans and serve as a liaison to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, as well as state and local officials, and nonprofit service organizations.

- Additionally, Homes for Heroes requires HUD to submit a comprehensive annual report to Congress on the housing needs of homeless veterans and the steps HUD has taken under the programs provided for in the bill. This section codifies this Administration's report entitled: 'Veterans Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress'.

Inter-agency coordination will improve our ability to reduce homelessness among veterans and reduce inefficiencies in the current system that wastes money - dollars that could be better spent on the front lines of this crisis.

H.R. 3298 passed by a vote of 414 - 5.